

LOUISIANA WATER RESOURCES COMMISSION

FALL WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Thursday, October 17, 2013
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
10:00 AM – 3:15 PM

Prepared by:

The Department of Natural Resources

Office of Conservation

Environmental Division Staff

Members of the Water Resources Commission in Attendance:

Office of the Governor & Chair – Honorable Scott A. Angelle

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries – Kyle Balkum

Louisiana Municipal Association – Honorable Glenn Brasseaux

Water Law Attorney – Mark S. Davis, Tulane Law School

Louisiana Landowners Association – Paul Frey

The League of Women Voters, the Louisiana Wildlife Federation, and the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana – Karen Gautreaux

The Louisiana Ports Association – Jerry V. Graves

The Governor’s Office of Coastal Activities – Charles Killebrew, Ph.D.

Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development – Christopher Knotts, PE, F.ASCE

Louisiana Chemical Association, Louisiana Mid-Continent Oil & Gas Association, Louisiana Association of Business and Industry and Louisiana Pulp & Paper Association – Harold Leggett

The Chairman of the Senate Natural Resources Committee – Senator Gerald Long

The Capital Area Ground Water Conservation Commission District – Eugene Owen

The Sabine River Authority – Jim Pratt

Louisiana River Pilot’s Association – Michael E. Rooney

Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality – Vince Sagnibene

The Department of Agriculture and Forestry – Brad Spicer

Louisiana Farm Bureau – Linda G. Zaunbrecher

Members of the Water Management Advisory Task Force in Attendance:

Louisiana Ground Water Association – Herschel Bourque

Louisiana Rural Water Association – Patrick Credeur

University of Louisiana at Lafayette – Timothy Duex

Louisiana State University Agricultural Center – Ernest Girouard

The Irrigation Association – Marshall Goree

The Louisiana Chemical Association – Henry Graham, Jr.

The Louisiana Mid-Continent Oil & Gas Association – R. Michael Lyons

The Sabine River Authority – Jim Pratt

Louisiana Forestry Commission – C. A. “Buck” Vandersteen

The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana – Kathy Wascom

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Welcome

Dr. Matthew Reonas, Office of Conservation, called the workshop to order at 10:15 a.m. with welcoming remarks.

Introduction

Honorable Scott A. Angelle, Chairman, introduced the Water Resources Commission and Water Management Advisory Task Force members in attendance and provided an overview of the challenges facing the state with regards to long-term water planning and the importance of resource sustainability.

Education Session: Where We're At With Water Planning

Jerome "Zee" Zeringue, Executive Director of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) gave a presentation on the Coastal Master Plan; Karen Gautreaux of The Nature Conservancy of Louisiana, former Chair of the Ground Water Resources Commission and current member of the Water Resources Commission, gave a presentation on the initial development of the state groundwater management program; Gary Snellgrove, Director of the Environmental Division in the Office of Conservation, gave a presentation on the evolution of groundwater management since 2003; James Devitt, deputy general counsel for the Department of Natural Resources, gave a presentation on the creation and operation of the Surface Water Management Program.

Planning Session: Where We Need to Go

Mark S. Davis of Tulane University, and a member of the Water Resources Commission, gave a broad review of current water demand and management issues in the 21st century, and Louisiana's place within this matrix; Dr. Reonas, Office of Conservation, outlined the background and development of this workshop as a "next step" towards long-term water resource planning before turning the session over to a roundtable panel.

Roundtable Discussion

The facilitator was Nick Speyrer of Speyrer Consulting. The panelists included members of the Water Resources Commission, unless otherwise noted: Brad Spicer, LDAF; Harold "Hal" Leggett, industry representative; Pat Credeur, La. Rural Water Assn., Water Mgmt. Advisory Task Force; Jim Pratt, Sabine River Authority-LA; Chris Knotts, DOTD; Charles "Chuck" Killebrew, CPRA.

Public Comments

Several members of the audience made comments. See summary below.

Adjournment

The workshop adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

SUMMARY OF ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

The focus of the roundtable discussion was the set of questions based on a conceptual scope of services drafted for planning purposes in pursuit of a water resources management plan design strategy.

Q1: Is the proposed Scope of Services too ambitious in what it seeks to accomplish as a “next step” in the planning process?

- Ambitious but prudent; large amounts of data and information readily available
- On data for coastal restoration, CPRA is currently evaluating freshwater flows and nutrient needs for up to 25 diversion projects; CPRA also is studying gaps in the data that need to be filled
- Might view state water budget as more a series of regional water budgets, rather than a broad statewide allocation system
- Volumes of information out there, but whether that information is still valid is the question; before we assess where we want to go, we need to know what we already have
- Might be more attuned to regional watershed needs and issues
- There needs to be a discussion of reservoirs and how they might help aquifer recharge areas; a different use of reservoirs than purely for recreation
- Definitely need to have projections for population growth and water demand
- No. 1 focus must be on safe drinking water; a tremendous amount of water lost through transmission process; needs to be strong focus or statement on conservation measures
- Again, a lot of data available; the end product has to be balanced, and the burdens placed upon different users must be consistent with the rewards to be had through any plan
- Safe drinking water has to be the top priority, but after that prioritization of use is up in the air, uncertain; this issue needs to be addressed
- Need to make clear we are looking at all competing interests; a much tougher task 10 years ago than now

Q2: A major point of emphasis for many respondents was “inclusivity” of stakeholders in the planning process. What level of engagement can be expected from stakeholders, including trade, business, or interest group associations, in the inventory/budget process? Will they be able to provide accurate and timely data that reflects their needs, or should this be built into planning specifications?

- More engagement from business and energy interests than may be wanted; these groups will get involved in the planning process without doubt
- There is some concern about the ability of some sectors to provide enough data; concern also about a lack of data points in some places, for instance, with unaccounted for domestic well water use
- Need to see stakeholders as a resource with knowledge of local issues, or trade/industry specific issues; need to educate and focus awareness among these groups; their support can be invaluable on legislative issues

Q3: In their responses, several members pointed out that the proposed Scope of Services seemed to imply, in the words of one, that “Louisiana’s water budget can somehow be balanced.” What are the challenges or impediments, as you see them, towards achieving a balanced water budget in Louisiana?

- A single state water budget is overly aggressive; one single balanced scale will be a difficult challenge to achieve because of so much diversity;
- There is a need to identify deficits and surpluses on a region-to-region basis
- Don’t forget how important it will be to reach across state lines to Arkansas, Texas, and Mississippi in thinking about long-term planning; must account for their planning in our own work
- A more appropriate term than “budget” would be “prioritization,” to determine for ourselves how we want use our resources to the best benefit of all
- Many smaller utilities do not know how much water is coming out of the ground nor how much is being sold; 30 to 40% loss in some places; conservation infrastructure a major issue in balancing a “water budget”

Q4: What improvements would you suggest to this “next step” Scope of Services to help meet the goal of a “comprehensive statewide water resources management plan” (as articulated in the approved, June 5th resolution of the Water Resources Commission)?

- Emergency conditions or provisions ought to be considered; what if normal conditions deviate due to drought, flood, etc.? How does that impact water budget and/or allocation planning?
- Sustainability is the key issue; understanding minimum in-stream flows and having baselines is crucial for effective planning
- Will need to look towards sustainability as the main goal, but this must entail a review of our water laws

OTHER TOPIC SPECIFIC COMMENTS

- Doing nothing is not an option
- Without safe drinking water, there is no need to worry about anything else, industry, agriculture, etc.
- Need more frequent Commission meetings in different parts of the state
- Need to transcend individual stakeholder interests within the process
- Need to engage rest of elected leadership from Legislature; more robust outreach to political leadership must be a priority
- Public and legislators motivated by crisis; Louisiana perceived currently as not being in a water crisis situation; additional education and awareness needed for water planning effort
- Must review regional watershed groups concept as part of process
- Advisory Task Force should meet more regularly and be more thoroughly involved in any planning; Task Force includes many stakeholders with experience in their respective fields
- Look at water management plan of Greater New Orleans, Inc., for making water part of economic development strategy; a part of the solution, rather than a problem to be handled

- Ought to set clear timelines/deadlines for process and hold ourselves accountable
- Ought to consider using webinars or other digital formats to reach out to different groups
- Ought to look closely at the development process of the Coastal Master Plan as a guide to moving forward with planning development